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Agricultural Education for Young Adults



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Agricultural Education for Young Adults

*Bureau of Agricultural Education
New York State Education Department*

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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FOREWORD

The Bureau of Adult Education looks upon the continuous service of the school to the young and older adults of rural New York as a necessary ingredient to a better life for all and a better world in which to live that life.

We read with enthusiasm the sections of this bulletin which suggest adult programs designed to develop broader citizens as well as better farmers. It is equally important to remember young men and women on our farms will soon be the parents of the near future. They need, as do all young adults, the best possible understanding of this important new job.

Developing practices in public schools indicate a successful principle of adult education in its broadest sense which should be shared by and understood by superintendents, principals, teachers and other interested readers of this bulletin. This principle recognizes that the public school in accepting the responsibility for continuing education need not assume the responsibility for "knowing everything about everything." Rather the public school should view itself as a channel through which all community resources are mobilized to provide continuing educational opportunities to all members of a community throughout life.

While this bulletin suggests various ways in which agricultural teachers may render greater service to the adults of a rural community, these same technics would be of value to any person sincerely interested in pushing back the frontiers of adult education. Comprehensive adult education develops as members of a community feel that the experiences provided give them a feeling of personal and community gain. The teacher of agriculture acting upon the suggestions contained in this bulletin, can give to his community that sense of personal and group advancement so essential to community development through adult education.

LAWRENCE L. JARVIE

*Associate Commissioner of Education for
Technical Institutes and Adult Education*

Agricultural Education for Young Adults

INTRODUCTION

Each adult in our present-day society is in the grip of many conduct-making and conduct-changing forces. Rapid developments in transportation and communication, improved productive capacity per worker, widening interest in professional and amateur sports, improved personal and community health resources, the expanding contributions of new inventions and research findings and the like combine to place adults in an environment that is both transformed and transforming. In the general field of agriculture, including production, management and marketing, these changes have brought about acute needs for educational services that will assist the individual adult to achieve increased competence in his vocation, better adjustments in his personal life activities and greater acceptance of the responsibilities of citizenship. The educational activities and experiences for adults which center in citizenship training and the adjustments in one's personal life and in his relationships with his fellow men are usually termed *general education* while those school services which deal with the operative skills, related technical knowledge, managerial abilities and occupational adaptiveness are termed *vocational education*. Clearly it is the function of the entire school organization to provide a united and well-correlated teaching program for adults including both young men who have recently been graduated from or who have left school, and mature farmers. School officials and teachers of agriculture who have conducted such programs have been quick to abandon the idea that education is preparation, and to accept and apply the principle of education as life itself.

Population distribution studies indicate that there are approximately three times as many adults as children and youth of school age, and we know that the adult span of life is approximately three times as long as that of childhood and youth. Among the large number of educational agencies serving adults who constitute such a substantial segment of our population, the school should assume an ever-expending role in meeting the needs of *all* the youth and adults

within its patronage area. Legal authorization for grants in aid from both state and federal sources specifically earmark funds for adult education. For example, the Smith-Hughes Act of Congress together with supplemental acts states that a primary purpose of agricultural education is to serve "those persons who have entered upon the work of the farm"; likewise, the State Education Law makes special provisions for agricultural training for adults and by sections 3603 and 3603-a of the law provides substantial state aid for approved classes.

Beginning in 1924, the movement to establish adult classes through high school departments of agriculture was launched on an experimental basis. Step by step progressive local programs were enlarged both in scope and number until a decade later there were approximately 7000 adults enrolled. The critical needs for technical knowledge and adaptiveness in meeting the economic hardships of the depression years gave a further impetus to the movement. Then during the war years with the nation-wide demand for maximum food production and with the appropriations from the United States Government, a total of approximately 25,000 adults were enrolled for agricultural training. With the close of the war these food production services gave way to the newly established services for veterans which have taken the form of "Institution-on-Farm Training." In this program veterans devote essentially full time to production and management work as workers or self-proprietors, and spend 200 hours each year in systematic school instruction in agriculture under the direction of the local school officials and teachers and 50 to 100 hours in supervised practice activities. Veterans so engaged receive the standard subsistence allowance and the local board of education receives the standard tuition payments from the Veterans Administration. At the close of the 1947-48 school year, approximately 3500 veterans were enrolled in 196 centers. In addition to this group, adult classes were maintained in agriculture for nonveterans with an enrolment of 1300.

It is the primary purpose of this bulletin to assist local school officials, teachers, advisory committees and the leaders in farm organizations to provide in each high school department of agriculture the organization facilities and teaching personnel to serve adequately the needs and interests of adults in a well-balanced program. The modern union free school and the central school are unique community service agencies. Excellent libraries, recreational facilities, resources for avocational activities, well-equipped shops and superior agricultural teaching equipment have been provided. Likewise a

body of tested experience in recruiting groups, selecting materials and methods of instruction, assisting youth in establishing themselves in farming, building suitable youth organization activities, guiding recreational and social events and the like, has been developed and is made available in the more essential features through the suggestions here presented. The bulletin has been prepared by a committee including A. E. Champlin and Ralph C. S. Sutliff of the Bureau of Agricultural Education and E. R. Hoskins of the Department of Rural Education, State College of Agriculture.

Present experience points conclusively to a widespread interest on the part of young adults to take advantage of the educational opportunities offered especially for them by the local school. Many have learned to keep abreast of new research findings that come from the State Agricultural Experiment Station or from the Agricultural Extension Service in increasing the efficiency of their own farm operations, and are participating in the avocational and social activities of the school. The modern farm organization, serving both the producer and the consumer, must rely on the schools and colleges for trained leadership and intelligent membership. We are beginning to understand that leadership can be learned by youth only as they practise the skills of productive group work in a variety of group settings. Likewise self-evaluation on the part of youth of their own ways of working and group planning to improve procedures is highly necessary. Confidence in trying out new patterns requires a free and permissive atmosphere and effective guidance. The community of interests that naturally center about the school and its resources is a primary asset in building older youth programs and activities. Other public and private youth agencies at the county or state levels may contribute many helpful services, but the activities of groups of young people organized about the easily accessible facilities and leadership of the school will become the foundation which should undergird a state-wide adult education program intended to reach the maximum number of rural people.

The critical issues and problems of our time will be met by the productive competence, the socio-civic intelligence and the ethical stability of the American people. The wise use of our material and human resources will help to hold and to improve our standards of living. The tensions of our society can be relieved only by a moral and social wisdom, however, and that kind of wisdom can not be achieved by new processes of nuclear physics or the technics of jet propulsion. Through the channels of better adult education we should

assist our rural youth and mature farmers to know that a rising price level and high purchasing power taken alone are not the measure of a great society, and that ethical and cultural values are not the inevitable consequence of our power to consume.

ARTHUR K. GETMAN

*Assistant Commissioner for
Vocational Education*

EXTENDING SCHOOL SERVICES

The recent War Training Program and the present Institution-on-Farm courses for veterans have clearly demonstrated that the central and rural union schools can very profitably extend their services beyond the scope of elementary and secondary grades. An educational and recreational program with older youth offers an opportunity for the school to continue its service and maintain its position as a real community center.

AN OLDER YOUTH PROGRAM BUILDS A MORE EFFECTIVE SCHOOL SYSTEM

An older youth program provides an opportunity for developing closer relations between the school faculty and the people in the school area. It may be as important for the teaching staff to know the patrons of the school and understand their problems as it is for the staff to know their formal subject matter. It is equally important that the people in the school area get to know the teachers of their children. An older youth program provides an opportunity for such cooperative action between the school and the people of the district.

A PROGRAM FOR OLDER YOUTH

As the logical liaison member of the staff, the agricultural teacher will be placed in a position to understand better the economic and farming problems of the community and thereby provide for his regular pupils a more practical teaching program. The teaching of adults will serve to broaden the educational vision of the teacher. Experience with the veterans and the War Training Program has already shown that the teaching of adults does develop a more effective agricultural teacher.

Recruiting the Group. Experience has also shown that most agricultural teachers will need to exercise their ingenuity to the limit to secure the cooperation of the young people in their community. These young people consider that they have completed their formal period in school. They are interested in jobs, having a car to drive, money to spend and freedom to go and come as they wish. Any program designed to attract them must compete successfully with

their present social activities and must tie into their present interests.

No definite formula for securing this cooperation is available. It is possible to enumerate a few tangible procedures used by those teachers who have organized successful out-of-school groups. The intangible personal relationships which may aid in developing a cooperating group can not be tabulated. These factors can be supplied only by the teacher on the job and in the light of existing circumstances in any specific community. The following activities have been used successfully by teachers as a partial aid in recruiting an older youth group.

Visiting young men out of school on farms. A teacher of agriculture should visit each young man out of school on a farm in his area. During these visits the teacher should show a keen interest in problems confronting the young farmer, and through discussion, focus the young farmer's attention on new problems that he has not yet recognized. It may be discreet to avoid any discussion of meetings or programs during the first few visits. The main object of these visits should be to gain the confidence of the young farmer and discover his special interests and problems.

Of course the first visit, as well as subsequent visits, will provide an opportunity to help the young farmer with his individual problems that can not be solved in group meetings. It is also imperative that the teacher maintain frequent contacts with each young farmer at his home farm and keep informed concerning the home farm during the full period when the young farmer is being served by the agricultural department.

When, as a result of these visits, the teacher is in position to select a problem of common interest among these young men, he may then suggest a meeting at the school or at one of their homes to discuss a possible solution. If this first meeting is so conducted that it meets the approval of the group, there should be little difficulty in arranging for future sessions.

Using letters and postcards to invite members to meetings. After it had been decided to hold the first meeting, letters or cards should be sent to each young man who has been previously visited at his farm. This notice should include time and place of meeting and topic to be discussed. After the program is in operation these notices may very desirably include a résumé of the activities of the previous meeting as well as notice of a coming meeting. The sending of these notices may not necessarily be limited to young men, but should also include young women if the topic is such that it might be of mutual interest.

Asking future farmers to invite members to meeting. A personal invitation, extended through a younger brother or sister, may prove a more effective reminder than the receipt of a post card or letter. Young men who have been outstanding in the Future Farmer Chapter while in school may be key individuals in the promotion of out-of-school group activities.

Using newspapers and farm publications to give notice of meetings. Newspapers and farm publications may serve as a medium for announcing meetings and keeping members and the general public informed as to the progress and accomplishment of the older youth program. Members of the group may be assigned the responsibility for publicity with the guidance of the teacher. A résumé of accomplishments including names of individuals catches the interest of prospective members.

Using radio to announce meetings. Local or near-by radio stations may be used to announce the dates of meetings. Participation in radio programs can add zest and enthusiasm to participants in the young farmer's program.

Telephoning to extend personal invitations. Many teachers use the telephone to call key numbers regarding plans for meetings. Sometimes telephone communication with each committee member responsible for notifying certain of the membership, has been found an effective procedure in maintaining attendance.

Using existing organizations to promote the program. Occasionally existing organizations may be used in the promotion of young farmer groups. Time can be well spent in securing the aid of such organizations as the Grange, the Extension Service, the parent-teacher association, churches, farmer cooperatives and other local service groups in recruiting members and developing a program with older youth.

Cooperating with the Extension Service in promoting and developing the program. The Extension Service promotes a state-wide conference of older youth with annual leadership training meetings. This state group is affiliated with a similar national movement. At present the Extension Service is working in many communities to assist local organizations of older youth and provide programs of interest and aid to them. This offers an excellent opportunity for cooperation between the local school and the Extension Service. The Extension Service needs the assistance of the agricultural teachers and the facilities of the school. The agricultural teacher needs the assistance of the county agents and the 4-H leaders in recruiting young men and young women and in carrying through the program.

PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAM PLANNING

A successful program with young people can be expected only if they participate in its planning and operation. To provide a means for promoting this participation, the first meeting of the group can well be devoted to election of officers and appointing of committees. The program committee, appointed at this time, can then consult with the agricultural teacher and prepare a tentative program to be finally adopted by the group.

Types of service. The types of service which will best meet the needs of these young people should be given careful consideration by the program committee. It should be possible to select a desirable program within the two large fields suggested below.

The findings of research. Research is constantly bringing to light new procedures that may be applied to farm and home management. The breeding of better varieties of seed, the saving of time and labor in doing chores, and providing a better diet for the family are typical examples. The agricultural teacher can bring to these young people the latest results of research and guide them in observing and practising such as are applicable to their needs.

Personal and citizenship activities. In a democracy, success in one's chosen vocation is but a part of his obligation to society. A portion of his attention should be devoted to serving his community and the larger social and political world in which he lives. It is his duty as a citizen to decide whether John Doe or Tom Jones will best serve his township as commissioner of highways. He is the person who must determine whether the State shall appropriate more or less money for the support of local schools. By his support or disapproval of the "Truman Doctrine," the "Marshall Plan," and other important features of our foreign policy, he will determine whether he and his sons may live in a world of peace or perish in a third World War.

Through group discussion of problems affecting the welfare of members, may develop an enlarged interest, a better understanding and a more active participation in the role of citizen. Being better informed than others, the members of this group are in position to become leaders in the community.

The development and exercise of those faculties that enrich our living, through reading, music, entertainment, recreation and social intercourse, are essential to the full enjoyment of life. By screen and radio, an abundance of books and magazines and the daily paper, rural people are brought into daily contact with activities in these fields which may serve as topics of interest for the group program.

GUIDING THE ACTIVITIES OF THE GROUP

The success or failure of a program with older youth will depend in large measure upon how well the agricultural teacher maintains his role as guiding spirit of the group. He should be a constant source of inspiration and information, keen in detecting the various interests of the members and ever ready to give careful consideration to their suggestions. The agricultural teacher should be a leader and friend rather than a formal instructor.

Group participation. Member activity, mental and physical, should be the keynote of all meetings. This is essential if education is to result and member interest be maintained. If, for example, a group of young men decide to undertake a project of improving their present choring practices, the members must be guided in securing the necessary information from their home farms. The teacher may then assist them in compiling this information and guide them in determining what improvements should be undertaken. If, on the other hand, the project selected should be in the field of citizenship, then group discussion will become the main activity. To assure a successful program through group discussion will require very careful planning and use of the best known technics of discussion. In any case, the activities of the members are of primary importance.

Conducting the group meeting. A group is a true discussion group when it consists of a number of persons meeting together informally in a cooperative effort to understand, if not to solve, some problems of common interest. The method is that of an orderly and guided interchange of member knowledge, experience and opinion. The simplest definition is organized conversation. The members of the group play the active role in the proceedings. They, with their leader, who is one of them, provide all the facts as well as all the views. By definition, discussion can never be a lecture or debate.

Directing the discussion. Prior to each meeting the discussion leader, who will usually be the agricultural teacher, should prepare a brief outline of the topic to be discussed by listing the important points to be considered. It may be found more stimulating to state these points in the form of questions. A copy of this outline should be placed in the hands of each member at the time of the discussion period, or even better, at the time of the preceding meeting.

At first, any facts that may be needed for the discussion should be obtained by the leader and made available at the meeting. These facts may be listed on a chart, written on a blackboard, or in some cases provided in book or bulletin form. There is danger in the latter in that the discussion period may become a search for facts

rather than a discussion of their significance. Later, when sufficient interest has been stimulated, it may be possible to assign in advance to certain members the task of obtaining and presenting needed factual data at the time of the meeting.

It must not be overlooked that although the discussion method is adopted so that each member may have the opportunity of formulating and expressing his own opinions, yet opinions are valid only when supported by facts. This feature in itself, developing experience in forming unbiased opinions, may well be an important outcome of the program.

The discussion leader must be thoroughly familiar with the topic and its background, not for the purpose of orally passing out information, but to enable him to guide the discussion in the right direction and determine the factual data necessary.

The aim of the discussion leader should be to stimulate and guide the discussion and keep the meeting in control by acting both as chairman and referee. The leader must insure that all opinions have a fair hearing and that conflicting views may be freely expressed. He must be able to avoid mere disputes by requiring reasons and pointing out facts when needed. He must especially exert himself to bring all members into the discussion. If necessary, he should direct definite questions to the reticent, being very sure at first that the question is so worded that the member can readily give the answer.

It is important at all times that a clear distinction be made between facts and opinions. For example, it is a fact that George Washington was the first President of the United States. It is a matter of opinion as to whether or not he was the best President.

Other types of discussion. In the suggestions above, only one type of discussion with the agricultural teacher as leader has been indicated. At least for the first few meetings this type of organization would seem to be best. Later it may be possible to vary the type of discussion. A member of the group who possesses the necessary qualifications may be selected to lead the discussion, and the teacher may then become a member of the group.

After some experience, panel discussions may be instituted. If the panel discussion method is attempted, it is doubtful if any formal talks should be given by members of the panel. Panels should be opened by informal questions and answers among members of the panel, and later, questions to the panel members encouraged from others.

The use of cooperating speakers. Occasionally, the securing of a speaker from outside the group may be desirable but this procedure contains many possible pitfalls. The speaker may be well informed but dry and dull in the presentation of his material. He may not understand the interests and purposes of the group and thus bring in much extraneous matter. Listening to a lecture is a passive experience and offers little opportunity for development of thought by group members. If an outside speaker is to be invited, it might be best to spend a part of the previous meeting in formulating questions to be asked of the speaker. Previous to the meeting the speaker should be informed of these questions and of the interests of the group. He would answer these questions instead of giving a formal lecture.

IMPROVING THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF YOUNG ADULTS

The members of a group of young farmers participating in an educational program will present different degrees of progress in entrance into farming. Some will be already established in a permanent relationship on the home farm. Others will be farming for themselves through rental or ownership. Still others may be working for wages or even working on the home farm without definite financial arrangements. In spite of this diversity of status, each will be concerned with certain agricultural practices that are common to all farming but require specific application in each individual situation and are fundamental to successful farming.

Managerial practices. Almost anyone who has been reared on a farm is capable of performing routine jobs such as plowing or mowing. It is the ability to understand the farming business, to make wise decisions as to its operation that is to be gained by experience and training. The agricultural teacher is in position to give this type of training to the young farmers of his community whatever their present farming status may be. This is the type of training that is being given to veterans and it can be just as valuable for the other young farmers of the community. These veterans learn to keep financial records of their business. They record their production from dairy, poultry and crops, and with the guidance of the agricultural teacher, determine the managerial practices that should be adopted to increase the net farm income. The agricultural teacher, or his assistants, make frequent visits to the veteran's farm and give him such further aid and instruction as needed in putting these

improved practices into operation. The teacher who guides a non-veteran group has this same responsibility.

Long-range planning. The successful farmer plans for the future. The young farmers in the community who are already established need aid from the teacher in planning the future growth and operation of their business. Those young farmers who are not yet established need guidance in planning a personal program that will eventually lead them to the goal of farm ownership.

Working efficiency. The high cost and dearth of satisfactory farm labor during and since the war has given a strong impetus to more efficient use of labor on the farm. Research in this field has shown almost unlimited opportunity for saving of time and labor in doing many of the farm jobs. Bringing the results of this research to the young farmers of a community and guiding them in implementing these efficiency practices into the operation of the home farm could in itself provide an educational program that would pay large dividends for the future.

Continuing use of school facilities. Any well-equipped school has many facilities which are not present or can not be afforded by the average farmer. The use of these facilities in the repair of farm machinery or in building pieces of farm equipment that can save time and money may well provide an important part of a program for young farmers. The three thousand who are enrolled in the Institutional-on-Farm Program in the State are deriving both mechanical experience and added profit from this phase of their program. The veterans' experience has clearly demonstrated that young farmers and the teacher of agriculture, with the full support of the school administration, can develop a cooperative program that will return more money from farming and build a more prosperous community.

The agricultural teacher who is looking to the future will capitalize upon the present opportunity presented to him by the veterans, to lay the foundation for a future program for older youth.



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